

MAPPING: KEY FIGURES NATIONAL REPORT: PALESTINE

ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP



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Palestine- Key Figures National Report

I. Introduction and context

This report is part of a global mapping exercise launched by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and its regional offices within a partnership signed with the European Commission for the period 2016-2020, which aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development. Other research projects include a worldwide legal frameworks analysis, and several thematic researches on themes of significance for cooperatives.

Responding to challenges and existing knowledge gaps facing the cooperative movement, this research provides exhaustive information on cooperatives worldwide. This has been achieved by collecting the input of ICA members through an online questionnaire, and completing it with relevant national statistics, in order to obtain an accurate picture of the national situation. Mapping out cooperatives in each country provides a more precise picture of the cooperative context at national and regional levels, enhances the movement's visibility, networking, partnerships, opportunities, as well as advocacy, and empowers cooperators by providing them tools for positive change.

Within this framework, the present report showcases information about the cooperative landscape in Palestine.

i. Historical background

The cooperative movement in Palestine began under the British colonial administration in 1920s. After independence from British rule, while the movement witnessed growth in diverse sectors with the support from Jordan and Egypt, the continuing conflict between Palestine and Israel resulted in weakening of the movement. During difficult war times between 1960s and 1990s, cooperatives were used as a means to organise refugees and promote socio-economic development among them. Post 2000s, with the support from international organisations, the cooperative movement has again seen a positive impetus with focus being on an enabling policy and legal environment for cooperatives, peace and development, agriculture, housing, women and youth as key areas.

The cooperative movement in Palestine was introduced under the British colonial administration. The first cooperative was an agricultural cooperative of tobacco growing farmers established in 1924. It was set up in Acre (now in Israel).

In 1930s and 1940s, cooperatives in the agriculture, rural development and transportation sector witnessed a boost following the enactment of the first cooperative law in 1933. By 1947, there were 244 cooperatives in the country.

During the foreign rule in West Bank and Gaza Strip between 1947 and 1967 by Jordan and Egypt, cooperatives were part of the guided economic system policy in Palestine. Cooperatives were promoted among war refugees for economic advancement. During this period, consumer cooperatives were formed in the Gaza Strip as branches of the Egyptian central consumer institutions to allow consumers access rationed goods.

The occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel from 1967 to 1994 had a negative impact on the growth of the cooperative movement as support from Jordan and Egypt became difficult due to limited contact. However, existing primary cooperatives continued to support members at local level with basic goods and services including loans, consumer goods, medical insurances, water, electricity and housing.

With the establishment of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1993 to govern West Bank and Gaza Strip, cooperatives were brought under the supervision of Ministry of Labour (MoL). The General Directorate of Cooperatives under MoL became the official body responsible for registering and supervising cooperatives. Cooperatives that were formed between 1995 and 1997 were re-registered and consolidated in the national register.

The second half of 1999 and beginning of 2000 was a significant time for peace building between Palestine and Israel. Within the framework for 'Shaping the Future Together: Employment Promotion Through Self Help' (SHIFT), a number of projects were facilitated by the Cooperative Branch of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Cooperative federations were among the twenty partner organisations that came together as a network to implement the SHIFT framework.

The isolation of communities, restrictions on movement, commerce and human rights during Israel's occupation of Palestine brought out the need for coordinated actions towards development driven by common goals. The cooperative model assumed high importance among locals to develop self-reliance and community-based coping mechanisms. Area C is one of the areas which has seen the flourishing of the cooperative movement, where cooperatives have become the most common organisation type for herding and agricultural communities.

In 2009, to support reforms in the national cooperative movement, ILO assisted PNA to develop a cooperative development policy to steer the unification of cooperative law in the country (until now, cooperatives in West Bank and Gaza Strip were governed by laws of Jordan and Egypt). The law was formally passed in 2017 and it marked an important milestone for the cooperative movement in the country.

In 2017, a Cooperative Sector Strategy (2017-2022), prepared by the General Directorate of Cooperatives and ILO was launched. The Strategy focused on promoting institutional environment for the growth of cooperative movement; improving the financial and organisational performance of cooperatives; expanding cooperatives into new sectors including renewable energy; cooperative education among youth; and promoting technology industry among youth and women.

Post the enactment of the Palestinian Decree-law N° 20 of 2017, Cooperative Working Agency (CWA) was established in 2018 with the support of ILO to regulate and promote cooperatives and cooperative unions in Palestine.

The 2018 Voluntary National Review report of Palestine mentions the development and promotion of cooperatives as one of the measures to promote decent employment and economic growth (Sustainable Development Goal 8) in the country.

ii. Public national statistics

Public national statistics on cooperatives in Palestine have been taken from CWA's website and inputs from Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC) for the year 2019. The numbers below are only for West Bank.

NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES

In 2019, there were 342 active cooperatives in West Bank.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

In 2019, there were 39,370 members in active cooperatives in West Bank.

iii. Research methodology

The aim of the mapping research is to collect and make publicly available reliable and up-to-date data to understand what the cooperative movement represents in the targeted country. With this view, the data detailed in the present report has been collected using the methodology detailed below.

The methodological tools include a questionnaire used to collect the data, which was distributed online to the members, as well as a methodological note provided for further guidance. They were built jointly with all ICA regional offices with the support of external experts from the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and are applied in a harmonised way in all the target countries.

The classifications used in the research are consistent with the internal system used within the ICA movement (e.g. on membership status and types of cooperative

organisations) and with standards increasingly adopted in recent studies and by international organisations like the ILO – e.g. using international classifications of economic activities such as the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) rev. 4, which ensures the comparability of statistics both nationally and internationally, as well as with statistics on other forms of enterprises.

Regarding the target organisations, considering that a worldwide survey has very challenging goals, and while the value of directly collecting data from non-member cooperatives must be recognised, the present Mapping exercise targets cooperative organisations members of the ICA.

Furthermore, in order to complete the ICA members' data, the decision was taken to also look at external sources, to provide additional and more exhaustive cooperative statistics for the country. As a result, the data is collected following two strategies contemporaneously: 1) collecting statistics already available in the country; 2) carrying out a survey targeting ICA cooperative members.

The Mapping report for Palestine was prepared using information available on CWA's website and inputs from Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC) for the year 2019.

II. Key figures

Palestine has four ICA member organisations:

1. Cooperative Working Agency (CWA)

The Cooperative Work Agency (CWA), set up in 2018, is an independent body funded by the government, responsible for registering, regulating and promoting cooperatives. It became a member of the ICA in 2020.

2. Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC)

Established in 2003, the Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC) is a rights-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Palestine. It works with cooperatives and other community-based organisations for promoting food security, women's and youth empowerment and livelihoods, among others. It became a member of the ICA in 2014.

3. Palestinian Agricultural Cooperative Union (PACU)

PACU is a union of the Agricultural Cooperative Union, Animal Livestock Union, and Union of Olive Oil Pressing Cooperatives. PACU promotes cooperatives run by local farmers in order to better represent their interests on a national and international level. It became a member of the ICA in 1997.

4. Union of Housing Cooperatives in Palestine (PUHC)

PUHC seeks to support the collective efforts of individuals and/or groups from the middle to low-income strata to obtain decent housing. Its members are voluntarily linked as cooperative housing associations. The Federation aspires to contribute to guaranteeing the right of Palestinians to live decently and to strengthen the ability of Palestinians to maintain their land by enabling them to build on all Palestinian territories. It became a member of the ICA in 2018.

i. ICA member data

The data on ICA membership in this section was collected from CWA's website and inputs from Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC) for the year 2019.

ii. General overview

The present section provides an overview of data on cooperatives represented by CWA in Palestine.

| Category | CWA |
|---|--------|
| Year | 2019 |
| Number of active cooperative memberships in West Bank | 342 |
| Number of active individual memberships in West Bank | 39,370 |

Table 1: Cooperative statistics representing ICA membership in Palestine

In 2019, there were 30.9% female members in active cooperatives and 12.6% of active cooperatives were all-women cooperatives (in West Bank only).

iii. Sector overview

The sectors used below correspond to the categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned.

Cooperatives in Palestine are present in diverse sectors, including housing, agriculture, consumer, savings and credit, and service.

| Sectors | Percentage of cooperatives (2019) |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Agricultural | 41.2% (141) |
| Housing | 31% (106) |
| Service | 17.3% (59) |
| Handicrafts | 7% (24) |
| Consumer | 3.5% (12) |

Table 2: Cooperatives per sector in Palestine (2019)

III. Graphs

i. Percentage of cooperatives per sector

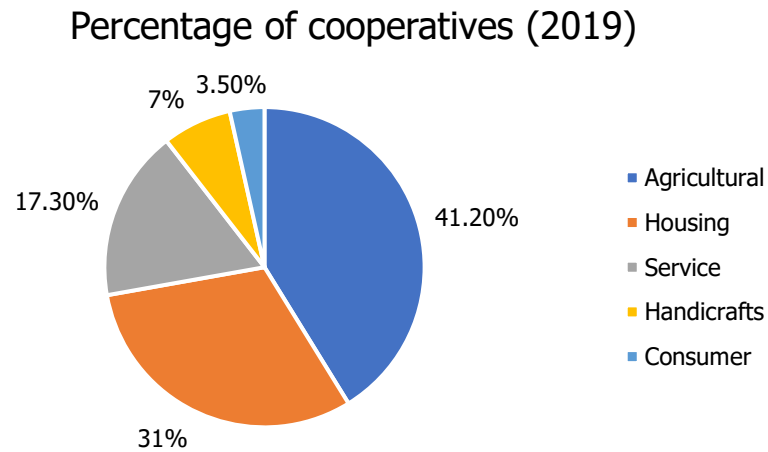


Figure 1: Percentage of cooperatives per sector in Palestine (2019)

IV. Annexes

Sources and contacts are listed below.

Sources

1. CWA: <http://www.cwa.pna.ps/>
2. ICA-AP (2021). Palestine country snapshot.
3. Inputs from ESDC

Contacts

Further details on the Mapping research and other country reports are available on www.coops4dev.coop

The production of this report was overseen by staff from ICA-AP Office. For any further information or clarification, please contact mappingresearch@ica.coop

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